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ABSTRACT

The current textbook series used in the compulsory cycle's English instruction has been the subject of much criticism, including the suggestions that it is too structurally oriented, contains little interesting or motivating material, has little functional or communicative content, is not Jordanianized but has only a surface Jordanian element, is classroom-bound in content and organization, and is overloaded with material. The texts have been blamed for the failure of English instruction in Jordan and were found to be inadequate for the objectives of the Ministry of Education, which have also been called too general and ambitious. The following proposals are offered for the new text series: (1) that they be constructed according to specific behavioral objectives; (2) that content include material relevant to daily Jordanian life along with foreign themes; (3) that they incorporate the findings of research conducted with Jordanian and other Arab students on contrastive linguistic and error patterns, attitudes and motivation, student interests, and language needs; and (4) that the texts include meaningful and realistic communicative material, be enjoyable for students at each level, combine three instructional approaches (structural, situational, and notional-functional), and be eclectic in methodology. It is also proposed that the government be more specific about a variety of pedagogical and structural details before the series is written. Appended is the Jordanian Ministry of Education's advertisement for the writing and printing of a new English language textbook series for the compulsory cycle. (MSE)

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The Prospective English Language Textbooks for the Compulsory Cycle in Jordan: Guidelines for the Implementation Phase [1]

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The recent Ministry of Education's advertisement in the Jordanian papers for the writing and printing of a new textbook series for the compulsory cycle has not surprised those involved in the field of TEFL in Jordan[2]. It was, in fact, expected that the ministry would take such a move in the light of the recommendations of the English Language Teaching Conference in Jordan: Status and Prospects which was held in Amman, Oct., 26-28, 1980. However, some of the conditions stated in the tender were provocative indeed and have already had some backlashes on the Jordanian textbook writing market which has in some cases been a success despite its difficult situation[3]. In this paper, the writer will attempt to briefly survey the criticism levelled against the present series and put some general guidelines for the writing of the new series.

The present Compulsory Cycle textbook series has been in use in Jordan since 1961. It was modified in 1970 and in 1973, but the books have never been brought up to the level of being 'good'. The Consultation Committee, a Committee appointed by the Ministry of Education (Salma Jayyusi, M. Sha'aban, Dwaik and Raja Nasr) to prepare a report that would serve as a base for a long range English language teaching program for Jordan, stressed in their report that New Living English for Jordan (henceforth NLEJ)

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is weak in many respects and needs to be changed. The weaknesses of the NELJ books, according to the Committee's report (1979:5), are :

1. The books are somewhat old-fashioned in approach, generally structurally oriented.
2. There is very little material that is in itself interesting.
3. There is very little material that may be called functional or communicative.

Nasr (1980:5) added one more weakness which is the fact that there is very little material that would justify calling the series a Jordanianized series.

In her evaluation of the series in a paper at the Amman Conference, L. Taminian (1980) concludes that the series is structurally oriented and whenever any communicative acts are presented, they are bound to the classroom situation. This, according to Taminian, explains the fact that learners - and even some teachers - in the compulsory stage cannot communicate beyond the classroom situation. The criteria for selecting and grading the linguistic components of the syllabus; namely, simplicity, regularity and frequency often conflict with one another. Moreover, in the choice of the lexical component, selection seems to have been based on the criterion of usefulness which seems to have been interpreted to mean 'relevance to the learner's needs in the classroom situation'. Taminian (1980:6) concludes that the greatest deficiency of the compulsory cycle syllabus is its failure to prepare the learner to use his language in communication.

In a report submitted to the Ministry of Education, Julian Corbluth (1981:8), English language supervisors and Teacher Training Advisor, judges NLEJ to be outdated. Though sound in the selection of vocabulary and structures, it is "extremely

unmotivating, a lot of material is basically dull, purely mechanical operations are emphasized and the typical exercise consists of a number of disconnected sentence". Moreover, because the course derives from Stannard Allen's Living English Structure (1948), the Jordanian element in the course is 'added on' rather than an integral part of the course. Despite the shortcomings of the series, Corbluth (1981:8) stresses that the main problem of the English language teaching situation in Jordan is the standards of the teachers rather than the teaching materials.

In her thesis Towards a Communicative Syllabus for the Compulsory Cycle in Jordan, Lababidi (1983:66-88) analysed ten randomely selected lessons from NLEJ (books 1-5) for their communicative content using criteria for communicativeness developed from the literature. The results of the analysis indicated that 'none of these lessons included activites that can be considered communicative'. Lababidi concluded that the exercises were manipulative in nature and more emphasis was always placed on grammatical accuracy than on fluency. "Immitation and repitition without understanding" Lababidi concludes, "are considered the core of language teaching in the NLEJ series".

The most comprehensive evaluation of the series was conducted by John Field (1981 a,b,c), a representative of MaCmillian Press Limited, who took the initiative after Amman Conference and conducted a general survey of English teaching in the Jordanian schoolswith due emphasis being laid on the textbooks in use in both the compulsory and secondary cycles.[4] In a detailed report, Field (1981a) reviewed the NLEJ series examining the skills taught, the grammatical structures taught, the communicative value of the language learnt, grading of the material, vocabulary, concept of language and the physical features of the book. Field concludes that most of the blame for the decline in standards of English in the Jordanian Schools can be placed on NLEJ. He maintains :

> "Poor teaching at Compulsory level seems to result less from the teacher's poor knowledge of English (and) the teacher's lack of technique than from the inadequacy of the coursebook".

Though the validity of this concluding statement can be questioned on various grounds, it may, through outlining the deficiencies and inadequacies of NLEJ, specify what features a new textbook series should have. Based on his attendance of the Amman conference, visits to 29 Ministry of Education Schools in various districts in Jordan, administration of language tests in several schools and discussions with TEFL authorities in the Ministry Community Colleges and the two national Universities, Field (1981b) judges NLEJ as a 'very unsatisfactory course" which :

> has no communicative element. The activities included in it are simple, routine and linguistically unproductive. As a result, the teacher is rarely required to speak freely.
> - is very tightly graded. The Elementary teacher (the weakest linguistically) never has to bother with the more complex structures of English.
> - provides the teacher with a limited range of classroom discourse. Most teachers over-use this; but it does give them confidence.

Field (1981:5) further claims, based on his impressions in the class visits he made, that a number of weaknesses in the teaching methods in use in the Compulsory schools "derive from the coursebook". Such weaknesses include :

- Working through the book page by page
- Lack of correction technique
- Excessive and often meaningless use of chorns.
- Routine presentation, with little heed to what was being presented.
- Inability to present new structures in a meaningful context.
- Inability to teach vocabulary meaningfully.
- Use of stereotyped sentences.
- Programming of class to respond automatically.
  Overload of material : lack of pace.

These features, according to Field, reflect the kind of activities proposed in the Teacher Book and the overall structure of the course which provides no guidance as to :

- how much should be taught in a lesson
- how to present new items (The Teachers Book often gives only a few model sentences, out of context)
- how to correct
- how to vary the structure of the lesson.

Viewed in terms of the Compulsory Curriculum, NLEJ was judged by Field as "limited" in its achievement of the objectives specified in the Compulsory Curriculum Guide of the Ministry of Education (1965). It provides no exposure to informal spoken English, teaching material does not have a high communicative value and it offers no structured introduction to composition.

If the NLEJ series is judged deficient in various respects, what should the prospective series be like ? What features should the series have ? In what follows are some general proposals. Each of the features embodied in those proposals needs to be broken down into components which can be easily implemented in the writing of the new series. Those general guidelines are intended to be of help for the writers.

1. Goal oriented

It is axiomatic that sound curriculum planning necessitates the specification of a set of objectives to be achieved by the curriculum. Such objectives become, as Tyler (1970:3) asserts, . . the criteria "by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and tests and examinations are prepared ". The Jordanian Ministry of Education perceived the specific objectives of English language teaching in the Compulsory Cycle to be :

After five years of learning English, the pupil is expected to be able to do the following :

1. Understand simple English spoken at a normal speed.
2. Communicate sensibly with an English-speaking person, within certain reasonable areas.
3. Read simple English with ease, fluency and understanding.
4. Write a parapraph in English, using the basic structures of the language.

Those objectives have been severely criticised as being " too general, ambitions, unrealistically demanding and worded in flowery language"(see Harrison et al, 1975, & Nasr 1980). It was always recommended that these objectives be broken down into more specific objectives and re-written in operational terms. More importantly, the objectives need be feasible of attainment and stated in a form that makes them helpful in selecting learning experiences and in guiding teaching (Tyler, 1970).

In the proposed English language Curriculum for the compulsary Cycle, Tayyusi et al (1983:6:25) did indeed break the general objectives into more specific ones, and specified in operational terms the objectives for each of the five compulsory cycle classes(Fifth- Third preparatory) and did that for listening and speaking, reading and writing. The work of Jayysi et al in this area is commendable indeed, and can be used as the main framework of reference for the writing of the new textbook series.

2. Jordanian

One of the main criticisms levelled against NLEJ in that the Jordanian element was 'cosmetically' added. In the new series, the Jordanian element should be original and integral. However, it should not be superficial where John is Jordanianized by replacing it with Karim or London by Amman, but it should include material relevant to the local environment which would consequently enable the learner to relate the language he learns to his own environment.: Thus, learning becomes more meaningful. The Jordanian way of life is to be viewed as a part of the Arab way of life. The Proposed English Language Curriculum for the Compulsory Cycle (1983) argues against 'culture free' English, and recommends a judicious blend of national and foreign themes

and topics rather than being entirely Jordanian and Arab in coverage because it is ultimately not possible to separate a language from its cultural roots.

It is to be made clear that a measure of caution should be practised on the inclusion of Foreign content. Since our students are young boys and girls 11-16 years of age, whose cultural identity is being formed, they could be influenced and even disturbed by the kind of image portrayed for the target culture in the textbook. The teaching of culture is to be differentiated from acculturation. The foreign culture taught in these textbooks should be systematically introduced in the context of contrasts, showing similarities and difference. The message implied is that the foreign culture is different, probably interesting, but definitely not superior. Content that portrays Western institutions, values or life styles as ideals to be emulated is inappropriate and aims at acculturation rather than the teaching of culture. English is an international language but, definitely, is not an international culture. Other peoples of the world have their own cultures to worry about and the lack of judiciousness in the choice of cultural content will lead to the alienation of the student from his own culture. The Arab society has witnessed a great deal of Westernization, and leading in this area is the young's keenness on the acquisition and adoption of western ways of living. A visit to a university campus in an Arab country could reveal how much alienated our students have become. The core of the language and social science curricula in these schools should reinforce rather than threaten the pride each student should take in his own culture and ways of living. Similarly, stereotyping is rejected .

Being Jordanianized the coursebook is expected to cater for the Jordanian educational situation with its peculiarities. Field (1981 b:7), based on his visits to 39 Jordanian schools, lists the following features of the Jordanian educational situation which should be considered in the preparation of the new series.

3. Research based

The prospective coursebooks should consider and incorporate the findings of contrastive linguistics research conducted on Jordanian students in particular and on Arab students in general. A number of contrastive and error analyses studies has already been done on Arabic-speaking English as a Foreign language learners. Most of these studies are M.A. theses and Ph.D dissertation at various Arab and Foreign universities. The textbook writer needs to be aware of the problematic areas of English phonology, syntax and lexis that pose problems for the Jordanian learner. This knowledge should be translated into practical steps that facilitate language learning.

Research has also been conducted on the attitudes and motivation of the Jordanian learner of English. Research evidence in this area has consistently shown that the Jordanian student views English as an extremely useful language. He views the task of learning the language positively. Studies have consistently shown the Jordanian learner is instrumentally motivated to learn English. He is interested in the utilitarian aspects of English. (See Harrison et al 1975, Zughoul et al 1979, Salih 1981, Zughoul and Taminian Forthcoming). It was recommended in the Amman conference that the motivation of the Jordanian student be reinforced and that attempts be made to meet his instrumental motivation by providing English for Special Purposes training after the compulsory cycle.

An other area that needs to be researched before writing the coursebooks is the area of interests. What kinds of things are Jordanian students at different ages interested in doing, learning about, reading about or writing about? An interest inventory is to be prepared for each class from the 5th Grade to the 9th Grade. Such an inventory would help the textbook writer in the choice of content material and make the content relevant, appealing and interesting to our students.

The final area to be researched is the 'needs' of our students for English, i.e. conducting 'needs analysis'. In the Proposed Curriculum for The Compulsory of Education, Jayyusi et al (1983:3) argue that a needs analysis for the compulsory cycle students is not necessary and unrealistic because an eleven year old 'child' of the Arab Jordanian community cannot be expected to feel a need for learning English or to foresee a future need for it at that tender age. Moreover, Jayysi et al claim that the future use of English for these students is unpredictable. Consequently, the curriculum emphasizes the educational value of English as a school subject and its instrumental value in the Jordanian community. Jayyasi et al's claims are incongruent with the findings of socio-linguistic research and the realities of the Jordanian situation. If a student at the age of eleven cannot decide on his needs for English, the language planners and educators can always identify those needs through systematic surveying of these needs on a country wide basis and through systematic research into those needs. The future of English, on the short run at least, can be well predicted and it has been predicted by sociolinguistic research (See for example Fishman, Cooper and Conrad 1979).. In addition to that, if our main purpose of teaching English is teaching it for its educational value, the logical question that follows is why English? Why not French, Spanish, German or Russian? Identifying the needs of the learner for English is a step that should be taken if the English program is to respond to the needs of the learner which are an integral part of the needs of the community. A needs analysis can have a bearing on the selection of content and on the teaching of particular language skills.

4. Communicative

Due emphasis in the new series should be placed on the inclusion of communicative material that is meaningful, realistic, stresses understanding and enables the learner to extract and transfer information using his own words rather than parroting what the teacher or the textbook says. Our final target is communication and the ability of the student to transfer his knowledge of the language to

new contexts and situations is central to the issue of communication. As Newmark (1979:162) puts it "we want the learner to be able to use the language we teach him, and we want him to extend his ability to new cases to create new utterance that are appropriate to his needs as a language user". The student should always be made aware of what Morrow and Johnson (1979:9) call "contextual appropriacy", awareness of who is speaking, who is spoken to, where they are, why they are speaking what they are talking about and what their attitude toward the topic is. The material should always show a genuine need to communicate.

Communicative language teaching necessitates creating opportunities for the student to express himself freely without being controlled, and creating what has been called in the literature "information gaps", where the student can inquire and respond freely. Grammatical accuracy is important, but fluency is more important.

5. Interesting and Motivating

The inventory of interests discussed earlier can serve as one of the bases for the choice of content in order to make it relevant and interesting. I tend to agree with Field (1981a) that the new material should be less formal at the lower levels and should challenge the pupil to express himself in English by featuring games, songs, problem solving, projects and group and pair work. It should have a sense of fun for the younger learner and it should give the impression that language learning can be fun, indeed.

In addition to the inventory of interests, the textbook writers can rely on the intuition and observation of Jordanian teachers. They can also use published checklists to predict the communicative needs of students and thus make the material more relevant. Littlewood (1981:82-85) proposes the Council of Europe's Threshold Level Checklist as a valuable document that may make the task of the writer easier in this case. In

the document, the following six questions are to be answered.

1. What situations might the learner encounter?
2. What language activities is the learner most likely to take part in ?
3. What functions of language are likely to be most useful?
4. What topics are likely to be important?
5. What general notions are likely to be important?
6. What language forms should the student learn, in order to satisfy the communicative needs that have been described?

It is worth mentioning here that Jayyusi et al (1983:30-44) have included lists of themes, topics, functions and notions in addition to specifying the grammatical structures to be mastered in each grade. Those lists provide some general answers to questions 3,4,5 and 6. However, in the absence of an inventory of interests for the compulsory cycle students and in the absence of needs analysis studies on Jordanian students, those lists especially when supplemented by teachers' intuitions and observations may serve as good indicators of student communicative needs and general areas of intersest.

6. Eclectic in Syllabus

One of the least controversial issues in writing the new series is the necessity of adapting different features from the three main approaches to syllabus design; namely, the structural, situational and national functional. The structural approach has been criticised on the account of stressing form rather than meaning. Even when both are stressed, there is a

tendency to resort to manipulative activities and exercises which do not have a high communicative value. The NLEJ is mostly structural and most of the criticism drew on the fact that there was more emphasis on form than on meaning, and for the preoccupation with teaching the entire grammatical system. But, no matter how deficient this approach to syllabus design is, it has features that can be considered integral to course design. It is difficult to imagine a course that is not structured. However, structuring does not necessarily imply following a criteria rigidly.

The situational approach tries to predict the situations in which the learner is likely to need or to be involved in and then identify and teach the language in its social context that is necessary for linguistic performance in these situations. This approach is inadequate because the number of situations is limited and does not involve a wide range of structure. Moreover, language does not have to be always related to a situation. The typical example is that you might go to the post office not to buy stamps but to complain about delays in delivery. Despite those inadequacies, I think that situations can be incorporated in the new series because they are meaningful, practical and real.

The notional approach has been claimed by its leading proponent (Wilkins 1976:19) to be superior to the structural approach because it produces communicative competence and it sustains the motivation of the learner. It is claimed to be superior to the situational approach also because it covers all kinds of language functions not only those that occur in certain situations. But, as Field (1981c:2) points out, it produces courses which lack tangible structures. A wholly notional approach is viewed to be unrealistic for Jordan because it requires teachers with good command of English and with a high degree of sensitivity to English syntax. Moreover, it fails in conveying some of the abstract concepts in English.

The three approaches are not mutually exclusive, I tend to agree with Field's concluding advice to the Jordanian Ministry of Education to base the new series on a 'core' syllabus which is a combination of the three approaches.

7. Eclectic in Methodology

It is granted that there is no one 'good' method of teaching English as a foreign language. Preference to stick to one method can sometimes derive from practical considerations as when the teacher is poorly trained or limited in his knowledge of the language. Even if there is one method, it would be difficult to impose such a method on the teacher. Dogmatism in relation to methodology is faced with more rejection than adherence.

The new series can be geared towards an 'eclectic' approach in methodology which incorporates various techniques from different methods. However, such methodology should be in response to the needs of the Jordanian learner and his particular teaching/learning environment. The following criteria for methodology for the Jordanian situation were developed by Field (1981b). Field expresses the need

- For straightforward activities, which teachers can handle without too much difficulty.
- to avoid present regrettable tendency of teachers to work through coursebooks page by page.
- to shape textbook material around the teaching topic.
- for variety of activity.
- to consider function as well as form
- to introduce a strong communicative element : enabling students to use what they learn
- recycle all major teaching points and much of the vocabulary.
- to introduce informal activities (games, songs, puzzles)
- to develop all four skills adequately
- to integrate all course components
- to relate material to the everyday life of the Jordanian pupil.

Recent innovations in the area of language teaching methodology are thought provoking and worth looking into. Discussions in most EFL literature center around three or four major methods (Grammar translation audio-lingulism, cognitive approach) to the neglect of more recent developments such as the Silent Way, Suggestology, Community Language Learning and Total Physical Response. The new series can gear the materials to a variety of techniques deriving from these methods.

What have been discussed are general issues of direct relevance to writing the new textbook series. However, too many other related items need to be specified by the Ministry of Education before actual writing starts. These include grading, spacing, the exercises, testing, recycling, vocabulary, reading and writing, piloting conditions, supplementary materials, readers, physical production and illustration, and teacher retraining.

Notes:

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference on Cumpulsory Education in Jordan: Status and Prospects held at the Liason Office of Yarmouk University, Amman, Jordan, April 24-26, 1984.

2. The advertisement inviting tenders for the writing and printing of of the prospective textbook series appeared in the Jordanian papers on October 9, 1983. A copy of the ad is reproduced in the appendix.

3. A team of Jordanian scholars and teachers has been planning, writing and printing the Omani school textbooks, As the team started planning for the English language school curriculum, The Omanis withdrew the offer because of the Jordanian Ministry of Education's decision to look for a British publisher to write the Jordanian textbooks.

4. The representatives of three major British publishing companies attended the Amman conference and initiated contact on various levels with the Jordanian Ministry of Education.

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Appendix

Ministry of Education
Curriculum Direcorate
P.O. Box: 1930
Amman - Jordan

Invitation to
Tender for the Writing of English Language Textbooks for the Compulsory Stage

The Ministry of Education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan invites all qualified and interested publishers to submit their tenders for the writing and production of the new English Language Textbooks for the 5th and 6th Elementary classes and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Preparatory classes, in accordance with the new Curriculum set for those classes of this stage.

An agreement will be concluded to this effect within the framework of the following Four basic final terms (items) and conditions:

Item	Prospective Publisher (PP)	Ministry of Educaion (MOE)
1- Authorship	Provides two qualified authors.	Provides two co-authors.
2- Remuneration	is responsible for the remuneration of the two authors approved by (MOE) and for one of the two co-authors as well.	is responsible for the remuneration of only one co-author
3- Rights	reserves all rights for a period of not more than three years.	owns, and retains, all rights beyond that period.
4- Sales and Royalty	Supplies MOE with the number of copies of each book the (MOE) requires, within that period, at a discount of not less than 25% of the published price.	Pays to (PP) a royalty of not more than 10% of the Jordanian published price for books printed and distributed to schools by (MOE), only in the first five years beyond that period.

Notes:

1- At least one of the prospective authors is expected to have:
   a) written, or participated in writing, well-established textbooks for teaching English as a foreign language, preferably in the Arab World.
   b) taught English as a foreign language, preferably in the Arab World, for at least three years.

2- The publisher is expected to participate in training teachers in the use of the new course.

3- All tenders must be deposited in the Curriculum Directorate, Ministry of Education, P.O. Box: 1930, Amman, Jordan, not later than November 30, 1983.

(For) the Ministry of Education
Director of the Curriculum Directorate.

19.10.1983